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# Adoption Procedures in Ontario



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## Adoption Procedures in Ontario

### What Exactly is Adoption?

It's a legal and social process which establishes and nurtures a parent-child relationship. In its proper form, it protects the rights of the natural parents, the child and the adopting parents.

Ontario's adoption rate has declined over the past few years. Why? Because more single parents are raising their own children; the "illegitimate" stigma is fading and many unwed mothers are keeping their babies; the birth rate is lower and better regulated by birth control measures; and services to help keep families together have improved. With fewer babies available, today's adopting parents must often select among older children needing permanent families and homes.

Years ago, children could be adopted with few formalities. Frequently, a child simply took the adoptive family's name and lived as "one of the family". In many ways this was unsatisfactory for both child and parent. It provided little security for the child, whose legal rights and past identity could easily become lost, or for the adopting parents whose relationship with the child remained unprotected and could be disrupted.

Today, adoption, whether local or international, is, when conducted through recognized social organizations, a well structured and legally binding procedure.

### What form does it take in Ontario?

Ontario's *Child Welfare Act* (1965) details the legal process of adoption, from the original conditions of consent of the natural parents to the final court order making a child the *lawful child* of the adopting parents. Its intent is to protect the rights of every party involved in an adoption.

### Why are children adopted?

Many couples believe that children enrich and complete a marriage. Those who find they can't produce children will often adopt. Others, already with children, want to enlarge their family through adoption.

A concern for over-population leads some parents to adopt, usually a second or third child. There are, too, those families whose social conscience moves them to share their good fortune with less privileged children.

There are other, and less desirable, motives. A couple may seek an heir only to carry on the family name. Others may think of an adopted child as an "outside interest" or as a "replacement" for the loss of a child. Unwisely, a couple may expect an adopted child to restore a wavering marriage. A woman may fear and want to avoid childbirth.

Prospective adoptive parents are counselled to probe and assess their real reasons for wanting to adopt.

### Who are the children to be adopted?

Available-for-adoption children are, essentially, those whose parents are unable to care for them. Many were born to unmarried parents. Some were born to 'married' parents, before a serious family breakdown permanently fragmented the family unit.

Not all adoptable children are at the popular infant or toddler stage. There are many older children in need of homes and loving parents.

Some adoptive children have physical handicaps or are of multi-racial parentage. Others are brothers and sisters who are close to one another and want to be adopted into the same family. Such conditions often make it difficult to find them a home. Generally, almost every child is better for having a permanent place in a family.

Of course, not all children deprived of a normal home life are prospects for adoption. Many are put in the 'temporary' care of Children's Aid Societies while efforts are made, often successfully, to restore stability to their family life.

Before being adopted, some children will require a period of transition between separation from their own parents and a permanent position in a new family. During this time, the Children's Aid Societies will assess the children to determine what is in their best interest.

#### How does one go about adopting a child?

Would-be adoptive parents should contact their local Children's Aid Society, (listed at the back) to discuss adoption. A social worker will then talk with them, or perhaps invite them to an orientation meeting with other interested couples. Agency staff will describe the various aspects of adoption in Ontario today. If a couple wish to proceed, they will be assigned a social worker. It will be the social worker's concern to get to know the two individuals concerned, their life-style, attitudes and expectations ... and the kind of child who would comfortably "fit in" and benefit. (Interview reports are confidential.)

#### What is the adoption procedure?

1. The adoptive parents apply to their local Children's Aid Society.
2. Once the home is accepted, the family can be considered for a waiting child. Because the Society sees the welfare of the child as its primary concern, it concentrates on finding 'the right home' for him or her, rather than on finding a child for the applicants. Consequently, there may be a considerable wait before a child who readily fits into a specific home is available.

3. When an available child is located, introductions are arranged in various ways. When long distances separate parents and a potential child, video-taped recordings are often used to "introduce" a child and let prospective adopting parents see and hear the child. In like manner, video tapes of families are shown to children. Photo albums assembled by would-be adoptive parents are often given to a child, to give him or her a good idea of how the family lives.
4. Once the adoptive child is chosen and is acquainted with the new parents and environment, the child - with the Society's approval - moves into the home.
5. To help ensure a successful adoption, the law states the placement must be supervised by the Children's Aid Society for not less than six months from the time a child moves into the new home. (Sometimes, the probationary period is longer.) During this time, a social worker helps to resolve problems or difficulties which the family may encounter. Of course, even after an adoption is completed, the Society will continue to provide assistance upon request.

When all parties are ready to complete the adoption, the Society presents the case to the court and an adoption order is issued, making the adopting parents the child's legal parents and the child, a legal member of their extended family.

After the adoption becomes final, there may be times when the parents will want to consult their social worker. For example, an older child may need to talk about his or her natural parents. Or, an earlier experience.

Although a child may be able to talk freely with the new parents, the child or parents may need outside guidance to help handle their emotional reactions.

With very few exceptions, adoptions become happy experiences for all concerned. However, adoption, like child-rearing in general, is not without problems. When these occur, the Society stands ready to help.

How much does the adoption procedure cost?

The Society's services are free and Ontario courts charge a \$10.00 fee to file and enter each adoption order.

A birth certificate for the child in the adoptive parents' name is available for \$3.00 from the Registrar General of Vital Statistics, Government of Ontario. Adoption is not shown on the certificate.

Where are the adoptable children?

Locating adoptive families and children is done in many ways. A child already in the care of the local Society may fit into the applicants' home. If not, the Society may list the applicant(s)' home in the *Adoption Resource Exchange Bulletin*, published by the Children's Services Branch of the Ministry of Community and Social Services. This catalogue of approved families and waiting children goes to all Societies throughout Ontario.

The Children's Services Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services also sponsors the column *Today's Child*, written by Helen Allen. This column which introduces adoptable children is syndicated to daily, weekly, ethnic and religious newspapers throughout Ontario. Families interested in the children are asked to write to the given address or contact their local Society. Children are identified through the Children's Services Branch and the Society is notified.

Another means of locating adoptable children is through the television program, *Family Finder*. Helen Allen is one of the hosts and children from Societies all over the province come to Toronto to appear on the show. This program has run continuously since 1967 as a public service of CFTO Channel 9 in Toronto. It is circulated free of charge to TV stations all over Ontario. Again, interested families may write to the given address and are referred to the Society involved.

The *National Adoption Desk (NAD)* in Ottawa is another source of information on adoptable children and families. Under the auspices of the federal Department of National Health and Welfare, all Canada's provinces and territories may register waiting families and children, 2 and over. Occasionally, babies with specific needs are registered.

The federal desk is also a resource for embassies and foreign countries seeking Canadian homes.

Many children in other countries need homes that Canada can offer and some third world countries are considering Canadian homes for their needy children. The National Adoption Desk, mentioned earlier, has detailed information which may be obtained through your local Children's Aid Society or the Children's Services Branch, Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Are there restrictions on who can adopt?

According to the Child Welfare Act (Section 72), you cannot be:

- a) under 18 years of age. (In the case of joint application by husband and wife, the husband cannot be under 18 years of age).
- b) unmarried, a widow, widower or divorced person. (unless the court is satisfied that there are special circumstances that justify, as an exceptional measure, the making of the order).

In general, adoptions are restricted to adults the Societies' recommend as adoptive parents. Couples must have a stable, secure and harmonious relationship - one which can expand to accommodate a child. Social workers don't expect a couple to be 'perfect' or free of all problems. They do look, however, for families with proven problem-solving abilities and those which offer the best assurance of sound development and future happiness for the child.

### Should children be told they were adopted?

Yes. The fact that a child is adopted should not be concealed. The child who has always been aware of his or her adoption, is likely to have good feelings about it.

### How can one talk to people who have already adopted?

Groups of adoptive parents are forming to share their experiences and learn from each other. So far, most of these groups are located in cities but hopefully, adopting parents from smaller centres will form similar associations. An Association list is provided on page 9.

### Can adoptions be arranged privately?

Yes, but it's not advisable. Actually, it's risky. The reasons are many. For instance, in a private adoption, there's no help from a professional social worker, whose job it is to objectively assess the situation and provide guidance and counselling. Consequently, questionable motives for giving up a child or for adopting may go undetected; a child may be adopted into an unsuitable environment, or the biological parent(s) may have a change of heart during or after an adoption, often as a consequence of having received no counselling.

Also, there are legal fees to consider since a lawyer is required.

Later on, parents may discover that the adopted child has developmental problems, a health problem or a mental potential much less than expected. Unwed mothers will often stretch the truth - although well-meaning - about the true nature of their child's father. Believing it is in their child's interest to be adopted into the 'best' home possible, they will often say that the father was a university student, local lawyer or doctor. Inaccurate representations of a child's true background tend to go undetected in private adoptions (social workers, on the other hand, strive to establish the actual facts) and the mis-matching and heartbreak which may result are obvious.

On the other hand, a Children's Aid Society will make sure the child a couple wish to adopt is legally free and suited to them. Accurate information on the child's history and social and medical development is provided. Counselling for all three parties - the natural parents, the child and the adopting parents - is always available through Children's Aid Societies.

## Adoptive Parents Groups

### Belleville

Adoptive Parents Group  
 49 Cascade Boulevard  
 Belleville, Ontario  
 Telephone: (613) 966-3297

Mrs. Beverly Woodley

### Burlington

Canadopt  
 3081 Balmoral Avenue  
 Burlington, Ontario  
 Telephone: (416) 639-4140

Mrs. P. Turner

### London

Adoptive Parents Association  
 27 Buchan Road  
 London, Ontario  
 Telephone: (519) 453-2676

J.B. Hobbs

### Niagara Region

In the process of forming a  
 support group of adopting  
 parents

Contact:

Mr. or Mrs. M. McDermott  
 Niagara Falls, Ontario  
 Telephone: (416) 354-4355

or write:

Mr. W.M. Lidkea  
 Family and Children's Services  
 Box 516  
 St. Catharines, Ontario

### Sudbury

Sudbury Aware  
 4108 Theresa Avenue  
 Hanmer, Ontario  
 Telephone: (507) 969-5159

Mrs. E. Roberge  
 (awareness to world  
 adoptions and a respon-  
 sibility to everyone)

### Toronto

Parents Concerned  
 8 Cortleigh Boulevard  
 Toronto, Ontario  
 Telephone: (416) 483-5203

Mrs. Whitney

# Children's Aid Societies

## Algoma

65 Willow Avenue  
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario  
Telephone: (705) 949-0162

## Brant

70 Chatham  
Box 774  
Brantford, Ontario  
Telephone: (519) 753-8681

## Bruce

201 Durham Street West  
Box 279  
Walkerton, Ontario  
Telephone: (519) 881-1822

## Dufferin

51 Zina Street  
Court House  
Orangeville, Ontario  
Telephone: (519) 941-1530

## Durham

200 John West  
Box 321  
Oshawa, Ontario  
Telephone: (416) 723-5211

## Elgin

27 Southwick Street  
St. Thomas, Ontario  
Telephone: (519) 631-1492

## Essex

690 Cataraqui Street  
Windsor, Ontario  
Telephone: (519) 252-1171

## Essex R.C.

Box 2306  
Walkerville Pstl. Stn.  
1700 Assumption  
Windsor, Ontario  
Telephone: (519) 256-3176

## Frontenac

173 Princess  
Box 357  
Kingston, Ontario  
Telephone: (613) 542-7351

## Grey

715-3rd Avenue East  
Box 129  
Owen Sound, Ontario  
Telephone: (519) 376-7893

## Haldimand

653 Broad West  
Box 909  
Dunnville, Ontario  
Telephone: (416) 774-7471

## Halton

1160 Blair Road  
2nd Floor  
Burlington, Ontario  
Telephone: (416) 639-5193

## Hamilton

143 Wentworth Street South  
Hamilton, Ontario  
Telephone: (416) 522-1121

## Hamilton R.C.

627 Main Street East  
Hamilton, Ontario  
Telephone: (416) 525-2012

## Hastings

311 Front Street  
Box 186  
Belleville, Ontario  
Telephone: (613) 962-9291

## Huron

46 Gloucester Terrace  
Goderich, Ontario  
Telephone: (519) 524-7356

Kapuskasing

Model City Mall  
 Box 188  
 Kapuskasing, Ontario  
 Telephone: (705) 335-2301

Kawartha-Haliburton

570 Water Street  
 Peterborough, Ontario  
 Telephone: (705) 745-4679

Kenora

Ocean Avenue  
 R.R. #1  
 Kenora, Ontario  
 Telephone: (807) 468-5508

Kent

435 Grand Avenue West  
 Box 157  
 Chatham, Ontario  
 Telephone: (519) 352-0440

Lambton

720 N. Christina  
 Box 41  
 Sarnia, Ontario  
 Telephone: (519) 337-3231

Lanark

33 Craig Street  
 Perth, Ontario  
 Telephone: (613) 267-3140

Leeds & Grenville

R.R. #1  
 Box 549  
 Brockville, Ontario  
 Telephone: (613) 342-0310

Lennox & Addington

41 Dundas West  
 Napanee, Ontario  
 Telephone: (613) 354-4724

London & Middlesex

164 Albert Street  
 Station "B"  
 Box 848  
 London, Ontario  
 Telephone: (519) 434-8461

Muskoka (Welland)

62 Kimberley  
 Box 1107  
 Bracebridge, Ontario  
 Telephone: (705) 645-4426

Niagara Region

311 Geneva  
 Box 516  
 St. Catharines, Ontario  
 Telephone: (416) 685-1731

Nipissing

240 Algonquin Avenue West  
 North Bay, Ontario  
 Telephone: (705) 472-0910

Norfolk

County Building  
 Box 601  
 Simcoe, Ontario  
 Telephone: (519) 426-4290

Northumberland

230 Walton Street  
 Port Hope, Ontario  
 Telephone: (416) 885-8131

Ottawa & Carleton

1370 Bank Street  
 Ottawa, Ontario  
 Telephone: (613) 733-0670

Oxford

912 Light Street  
 Box 312  
 Woodstock, Ontario  
 Telephone: (519) 539-6176

Parry Sound

76 Church Street  
 Parry Sound, Ontario  
 Telephone: (705) 746-5851

Peel

49 Kennedy Road South  
 Brampton, Ontario  
 Telephone: (416) 453-4200

Perth

380 Hibernia  
 Box 278  
 Stratford, Ontario  
 Telephone: (519) 271-5290

Porcupine & District

54 Algonquin Blvd. East  
 Timmins, Ontario  
 Telephone: (705) 264-4257

Prescott & Russell

Main Street  
 Box 248  
 Plantagenet, Ontario  
 Telephone: (613) 673-5148

Prince Edward

6 Ross Street  
 Box 1510  
 Picton, Ontario  
 Telephone: (613) 476-2765

Rainy River

512 Central Avenue  
 Ft. Frances, Ontario  
 Telephone: (807) 274-3281

Renfrew

1219 Pembroke Street East  
 Pembroke, Ontario  
 Telephone: (613) 735-6866

Simcoe

Administration Centre  
 Simcoe Co.  
 Midhurst, Ontario  
 Telephone: (705) 726-6587

Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry

27 York Street  
 Box 994  
 Cornwall, Ontario  
 Telephone: (613) 933-2292

Sudbury

1492 Paris Street  
 Sudbury, Ontario  
 Telephone: (705) 522-8600

Temiskaming

64 Government West  
 Box 1084  
 Kirkland Lake, Ontario  
 Telephone: (705) 567-9201

Thunder Bay

309 South Court  
 Station "P"  
 Box 27  
 Thunder Bay, Ontario  
 Telephone: (807) 344-9124

Toronto

33 Charles Street East  
 Toronto, Ontario  
 Telephone: (416) 924-4646

Toronto R.C.

26 Maitland Street  
 Toronto, Ontario  
 Telephone: (416) 925-6641

Waterloo

355 Charles Street East  
Kitchener, Ontario  
Telephone: (519) 576-0540

Wellington

55 Delhi Street  
Box 1088  
Guelph, Ontario  
Telephone: (519) 824-2410

York

288 Cawthra Boulevard  
Newmarket, Ontario  
Telephone: (416) 895-2318

## Bibliography

### For more information

Below is a list of recommended publications. Copies are available from public or reference libraries. Some films on adoption are also listed. They may be obtained free or for a small charge from the indicated source.

### Books

Anderson, David C.

Children of Special Value. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1971.  
(interracial Adoption in America)

Bohman, Michael

Adopted Children and Their Families. Proprius, Stockholm, 1970.  
(A follow-up study of adopted children, their background, environment and adjustment)

Charnley, Jean

The Art of Child Placement. William Byrd Press, Richmond, Virginia, n.d.

Dywasuk, Colette

Adoption - Is It For You?. Harper & Row, New York, 1973.

Fanhsell, David

Far from the Reservation. The Scarecrow Press Inc., Metuclieu, U.S.A. 1972.  
(A transracial study of adoption of American Indian children)

Glickman, Esther

Child Placement. Columbia University Press, New York, 1957.

Gordon, Henrietta

Casework Services for Children. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1956.

Grow & Shapiro

Transracial Adoption Today: Views of Adopted Parents and Social Workers. Child Welfare League of America Research Centre, New York 1975.

Hartog, Jan de

The Children. Atheneum, New York, 1969.

(A personal record for the use of adoptive parents; a middle-aged doctor's and his wife's experience in adopting two Asian children)

Issac, Rael Jean

Adoption Today. Harper and Row, New York, n.d.

Jaffe & Fanshel

How they Fared in Adoption. Columbia University Press, New York, 1970.

(A follow-up study; Child Welfare League of America)

Kadushin, Alfred

Adopted When Older. Columbia University Press, New York, 1944.

(A report of successful adoptions of children who had been deprived and neglected during early childhood)

Kilbanoff, Susan & Elton

Let's Talk About Adoption. Little, Brown & Co., Toronto, 1973.

Kirk, David

Shared Fate. Collier - MacMillan, Toronto, 1964.

Kornitzer, Margaret

Mr. Fairweather and Family. Queenswood House Ltd.,  
Toronto, n.d.

Kramer, Betty (Ed.)

The Unbroken Circle. Organization for a United  
Response, Minneapolis, 1975.

(For families involved in or considering interracial  
or international adoptions; contains a glossary of  
some Asian languages.) Can be ordered from:  
Mrs. Peter Turner, 3081 Balmoral Avenue, Burlington.  
Cost: \$6.50.

McWhinnie, Alexina May

Adopted Children - How They Grew Up. Humanities Press,  
New York, 1967.

(A study of their adjustment as adults)

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The Adopted Family. Crown Publishers, New York, n.d.

Ontario Law Reform Commission

Report on the Status of Adopted Children. Ontario  
Ministry of the Attorney General, Toronto, 1969.  
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Smith, I. Evelyn

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Weinstein, Eugene A.

The Self-Image of the Foster Child. Russell Sage  
Foundation, New York, 1960.

Wolins, Martins

Selecting Foster Parents - The Ideal and The Reality.  
Columbia University Press, New York, 1963.

Adopting Older Children. Columbia University Press,  
New York, 1970.

## Films

16 MM Films From the Ontario Ministry of Community and  
Social Services, Communications Branch

Available from:

Modern Talking Pictures  
1943 Leslie Street  
Don Mills, Ontario  
Telephone: (416) 444-7359

A Way Out 22 min.

Also available in French

(Showing children as victims of broken homes and  
their views on adoption)

Along the Way 24 min.

(Illustrates the problems arising in adoption and  
the consequences of unemployment)

16 MM Films from the National Film Board of Canada,  
1 Lombard Street East, Toronto, Ontario  
Telephone: (416) 369-4093

Joey 27:55 min. (l.D. Nos. 106B 0164 164)

(The experience of adoption as seen through the  
eyes of seven year old Joey)

A Further Glimpse of Joey 27:52 min. (l.D. 106B 0166 079)

(Joey's adjustment to his foster parents)

Bye Bye Blues 28:32 min. (l.D. Nos. 106C 0173 129)

(The foster children's program in British Columbia  
is shown, revealing its various methods and problems  
while dispelling many of the popular myths shrouding  
this system)



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